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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to voice my opinion about the proposed timetable for the transition of our current analog broadcast television system to an incompatible digital system. I want it to be known that I am very concerned about this changeover.

I am in one of the many households in the United States that subscribes to a digital satellite service. I realize that the digital transition may not substantially impact the televisions that are hooked up to that service, however, we currently have four televisions in our household, only two of which are hooked up to this satellite service.

Why is that? Two reasons – First, if I want to hook up the remaining televisions to the digital satellite service, I will have to purchase two additional satellite receivers costing about \$94 a piece. Second, I will have to pay a recurring monthly charge for those satellite receivers to decode the satellite signals which cost another \$10 a month for each set. On top of that, the satellite provider charges extra for receiving the local stations, an additional \$5.99 a month. That means that for the first year, for my kids to watch broadcast television stations that they were, up to the transition, watching for free, will cost me about \$500 dollars. From then on, it will cost me about \$26 per month, just to allow my kids to watch the local channels.

But wait! We live directly between two large cities, Baltimore and Washington DC, both of which have broadcast television stations. Due to federal law, we are unable to receive the Baltimore television stations via satellite because we live about a mile south of the county line (if we lived north of the county line, we would be unable to receive the Washington DC stations via satellite...). So, for our initial investment of about \$500 and the subsequent \$26 per month charge, we will be able to receive half of the local broadcast stations that we are currently able to receive for free.

Additionally, because of bandwidth constraints on the satellites, the data rate and the resolution at which the local stations are being sent are such that the pictures from the local channels are of substantially lower quality than those that I currently receive with my outdoor antenna. According to what I've read at the FCC web site, section 336 of MM Docket #87-268 states that broadcasters must air "free digital video programming

service the resolution of which is comparable to or better than that of today's services". I feel that by making everyone who either does not have the money to, or chooses not to purchase a high definition television set watch degraded pictures is in violation to the spirit of this.

If I had enough money I could go out and purchase digital receivers for all four of my analog televisions so they can receive the over-the-air digital broadcasts, but since these receivers are currently in the \$350 range each, so that is not really an option. Also, I'm not really sure if they will work with my analog televisions anyway. After all, the television in my daughter's room doesn't have video and audio inputs – I would have to get a channel 3 modulator in addition to a digital to analog converter and the digital receiver. I can't imagine that a set top box that has a digital tuner, a digital to analog converter, and a channel 3 modulator would be cheaper than \$350 "high definition" receiver only.

So, what happens in my house if the television stations are forced to turn off their analog transmitters? We will no longer be able to watch the Baltimore channels, and we will be forced to watch the Washington DC channels via the lower resolution digital satellite service, and pay the additional \$5.99 per month for the privilege. I wouldn't want our safety to be endangered because the access to the emergency alert messages put out by our local television stations was taken away because I could no longer receive them.

Do I think that the government should purchase set top boxes for everyone who can't afford them? No. I think that the government should follow the original plan, and allow us the time to use our existing analog TVs until they wear out and then purchase new digital receivers when we can afford them. By giving into pressure brought about by companies that want to enrich themselves by utilizing the bandwidth that is being taken away from the broadcasters, you will be causing us financial hardship by either forcing us to spend money to receive the local stations, or by spending our tax dollars for the government to purchase digital receivers for people.

Should the government require the auction winners to pay for the conversion of analog-only equipment? Again, I would answer "No". There are a few of reasons why I think that would be a bad idea.

First, when the company is bidding on the bandwidth, they would know that they will have a huge capitol expenditure incurred, in addition to the cost of the bandwidth, and they will lower their bid accordingly. Because of that, the government would receive a lower amount of money than they would if they just went with the original plan and allowed us the time to use our existing analog TVs until they wear out and then purchase new digital receivers when we can afford them.

Second, who would have to pay for the conversion? Since the bandwidth is going to be split into several parts, is the first company that wants to use any part of it responsible for the entire analog-only equipment conversion? Perhaps they will only be responsible for the stations that are in the bandwidth that they purchased – then would we have a different converter box for each station? We could conceivably have three or four converter boxes along with a VCR piled on top of a thirteen inch black and white television that way.

Third, who is going to make sure the auction winners are fulfilling their responsibilities by providing the converters? Is the FCC going to? Is another

government agency? Are the auction winners going to have to pay for that, also? If so, the price that they are going to be willing to pay just went down again.

Finally, suppose all of the issues are worked out and converters are supplied to everyone who wants one (or however it works out). How long is the warrantee going to be for the converters, and what happens when these converters break down? Do we get another one from the auction winner, free of charge? If so, the price that the auction bidders are going to be willing to pay just went down again. If we aren't going to get a free replacement when the converter breaks, are we then going to have to purchase another one, or even perhaps a digital television, even if our analog-only television is still working?

Please allow us to keep watching the analog broadcast television stations as long as our analog-only televisions are functioning, per the original transition plan. I can't currently afford to replace my televisions.

Thank you-

Mark D. Bulla